

III. Remarks

Claims 25–57 were pending in this application. In the October 14, 2005 Office Action, claims 25–47, 51, and 57 were allowed. Claims 48–50 and 54–56 were objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, and claims 46, 47, 52, and 53 were rejected.

In this reply, claims 46, 49, 50 and 51 are amended, and claims 47 and 48 are cancelled. The Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and allowance of claims 25–46, 49–57. The Applicant thanks the Examiner for the telephone interview conducted on January 31, 2006.

Objections to the Drawings

The drawings were objected to because the reference numeral “40” in FIG. 2 points to the first member and should be numbered “30.” In response, the Applicant submits a replacement sheet, in accordance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.121(d), to correct this problem. Withdrawal of this objection is respectfully requested.

Objections to the claims

The Examiner objected to claims 46 and 51 because they should more clearly define the type of method claim. Claims 46 and 51 have been amended in accordance with the Examiner’s suggestion.

The Examiner also objected to claims 52–57 because the claims recite “means for connecting,” which could be anything, such as a screw, a thread, etc. In response, the Applicant notes that the objected to limitation is written in means-plus-function format, and should be interpreted in accordance with 35 U.S.C. § 112, sixth paragraph. As such, the limitation covers only the structures disclosed in the specification for performing the specified function. (See MPEP § 2181, *et. seq.*) Thus, the Examiner’s suggested amendment is not required.

Claim Rejections Under § 102

Claims 46, 47, 52, and 53 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 4,199,803 issued to Hunt III (“Hunt”).

In response, claim 46 is amended to include the limitations from claims 47 and 48. Claim 48 was objected to as being allowable but dependent on a rejected base claim. Thus, claim 46 is now directed to allowable subject matter. Claims 49 and 50 now depend from an allowable base claim. Accordingly, withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

Claim 52 recites limitations in a means-plus-function format. As such, the limitation covers only the structures disclosed in the specification for performing the specified function. (See MPEP § 2181, *et. seq.*). The Applicant respectfully submits that Hunt does not disclose all of the structures that are disclosed in the specification for performing the recited structure. For example, claim 52 recites a means for positioning the first support member so that at least a portion of a first planar surface defined by the first support member is angularly displaced from at least a portion of a second planar surface defined by the second support member. Hunt does not disclose any of the structures in the specification for performing this function. Thus, claim 52 is allowable over Hunt, and claims 53–56, which depend from claim 52, are allowable for at least the same reasons.

Conclusion

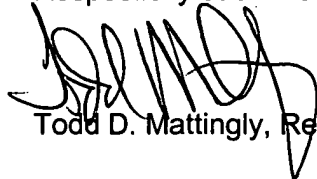
It is believed that all matters set forth in the present Office action have been addressed. In view of all of the above, the allowance of claims 25-57 is respectfully requested.

Unless stated otherwise, none of the amendment to the claims were made for reasons substantially related to the statutory requirements for patentability.

Furthermore, unless stated otherwise, the amendment to the claims were made to simply make express what had been implicit in the claims as originally worded and therefore is not a narrowing amendment that would create any type of prosecution history estoppel. In addition, to the extent that formerly dependent claims are now presented in independent form, such amendments do not constitute a narrowing amendment that surrenders any subject matter.

The Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number if a telephone conference would expedite or aid the prosecution and examination of this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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